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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Poland**DATE DISTR.** 17 Feb. 1955**SUBJECT** Care of Mother and Child and Labor
Protection of Female Workers**NO. OF PAGES** 5**DATE OF INFORMATION** **REFERENCES:****PLACE ACQUIRED**

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Care of Mother and Child

1. Every working woman and each married woman whose husband was employed was entitled to the following benefits under the existing laws and compulsory national health insurance.
 - a. Free medical care and hospitalization for themselves and their children.
 - b. The pregnant women were entitled to hospitalization in a maternity hospital or delivery room (izba porodowa) for the time of their confinement, usually a period of about 10 days.
 - c. Mothers were entitled to three months maternity leave with pay, formally six weeks pre and six weeks post-natal leave.
 - d. The working women were entitled to take time off during working hours for the time necessary to feed their children.
 - e. The mother or father of a child was entitled to a short leave, one or two days, to attend to a sick child, but only in case there was nobody at home to care for the child.
 - f. Each working woman was entitled to purchase a complete layette for the baby in government stores.
 - g. Every working woman was entitled to place her baby in a nursery during working hours.
2. the above mentioned rights were, to a great extent, difficult to secure in practice. The care and treatment of mothers and children differed greatly from town to town, especially in rural areas, and depended not only on the existing

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medical institutions, but also on the attitude of the management in each place of employment. Institutions which took care of the mother and child were very often described in the Polish press. The articles always referred to some model dispensaries or nurseries which were unknown. However, on the basis of conversations with mothers in the Warsaw area and in the rural area of Opole Voivodship, those articles should not be regarded as objective descriptions on which one could generalize. The articles in the press dealing with the rights of women and the care of mother and child were usually highly colored for propaganda reasons; the reality was in most cases much worse.

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3. Medical care for expectant mothers and for children was provided in consulting stations and dispensaries, located in large cities and voivodship seats, and by regional gynecologists and pediatricians. There was usually one Central Voivodship Consulting Station For Maternity and Child Health (Centralna Wojewodzka Poradnia Macierzyństwa i Zdrowia Dziecka) in every voivodship seat; large towns had several Mother and Child Dispensaries (Poradnia dla Matki i Dziecka). A few small towns had Mother and Child Dispensaries; villages had none.

4. As an example, conditions in a small village in the county of Strzelce Opolskie (N 50-31, E 18-18) inhabited by approximately 200 worker and peasant families.

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The nearest dispensary was in a town 10 miles distant and the mothers had to travel there for any consultations or aid. Only in urgent or serious cases could one call the county ambulance and doctor. For this reason, most of the mothers in the village treated their children themselves using home remedies and the advice of a midwife. The regional gynecologist, whose consulting office was in the same town as the dispensary, was always overworked. He had too many patients to attend to. And as a result, he treated them negligently and sometimes even brutally. They usually waited for hours to be admitted. The hygienic conditions in the consulting room were very poor. The same applied to a pediatrician located in the same town.

5. Generally it was very difficult to secure admission to a maternity hospital or clinic for the time of confinement and many women used all sorts of tricks and even bribes to gain admittance.

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a psychologist employed at the psychiatric clinic, started to visit a gynecologist in Warsaw as a private patient several months before the time of her confinement. She had done this only because she heard this gynecologist secured a place in a maternity hospital for his patients. She asked the doctor a few weeks before the expected birth of her child if and in which hospital she could get a bed. The doctor answered that she would get it by paying him 1000 zlotys before and another 1000 zlotys after the delivery. The woman could not afford this fee so she stopped going to this doctor. When the time came, she was admitted to a clinic because of the influence of one professor at the Warsaw Medical Academy. There were cases in Warsaw where babies were born in ambulances because hospitals had refused admittance to women already in labor when they had not secured the beds for confinement in advance. a resident of Opole (Oppeln) at the time of her confinement, was not admitted by the local hospital because she could not pay a bribe and did not have any influential person to help her. At the last moment, she was sent to a primitive delivery room in a nearby village.

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6. A three months maternity leave with pay was always granted. In practice, the pregnant women used to continue to work as long as possible before the birth of the child and take most of their leave after their confinement. In many cases this had adverse effects on the woman's health.
7. According to regulations, it was permissible for a working woman to take time off during working hours to feed her child but only in those places or factories that had nurseries. Very often, however, women did not take advantage of this opportunity because the foremen and managers of the factories did not like it and they were afraid to be accused by the Party of so called "bumelanstwo".
8. It was difficult for a mother or father to obtain a short leave to attend to a sick child. In order to obtain the leave it was necessary to obtain a certificate from a doctor stating that the child was sick, could not be admitted to a hospital, and that there was nobody at home to care for it. To obtain such a certificate a mother had to stand for hours in doctors' waiting rooms. If the child was dangerously ill, the mother was in a dilemma since the doctor did not have time to visit the child but he usually wanted to see the child before he issued the certificate. Mothers who asked for such leaves too often were accused of too frequent absence from work and sometimes discharged.
9. Very few mothers purchased government issued ~~clothes~~ for their babies because the material and quality of the garments was very poor.
10. Most of the working-class married women placed their children in nurseries during working hours. The mothers of the middle class and intelligentsia tried to keep their children at home under the care of older relatives or grandparents. [redacted] complaints that the nursing personnel employed at the factory nurseries were in most cases not well qualified. [redacted] a nursery at the Mental Hospital in Pruszkow which was well organized, well equipped, and efficiently operated. [redacted] of any cases of negligence or epidemics. [redacted] the nurseries in the rural area of Opole had a bad name and that the working mothers living there left their children in the nurseries only in cases where they could not find any other solution.
11. [redacted] the medical care of babies in maternity hospitals and wards was, in many cases, negligent. Each baby born in the hospital or delivery room was vaccinated against tuberculosis a few days after the birth. They used a vaccine [redacted] BCG. A certificate of vaccination was issued and the dates on which the child was to receive future vaccinations were entered. [redacted] spent about 10 days in a village delivery room at the time of her confinement. She did not nurse her child because she was suspected of having TB. The delivery room was not prepared for such cases and the personnel in charge was not well acquainted with other methods of feeding; as a result, the baby was fed by other mothers confined there.
12. Every new-born baby had to be registered in the Regional Health Center (Rejonowy Ośrodek Zdrowia). The medical care of mother and child provided by the center consisted of the following:
 - a. Issuing a medical card (Karta Zdrowia).
 - b. Weekly or periodic visits to the health center where the child was weighed, examined by a pediatrician, and treated if necessary. Prescriptions were issued there for medicaments, and special

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nourishment for babies, such as, condensed or powdered milk, Nutrosan, vitamins B, C, and D, and therapy treatments.

c. Vaccinations. Each child had to be vaccinated against small pox, scarlet fever, diphtheria, and whooping cough during the first year. Parents were usually informed by the Regional Health Center of the dates of obligatory vaccinations.

13. In cases of serious sickness the babies were sent to a hospital. There were, however, very few hospitals for children; most of these were in large university towns. Some provincial hospitals had small wards for children.

14. The source did not have any information about the present trend of infant mortality in Poland.

Labor Protection of Female and Juvenile Workers

- 50X1 15. [redacted] not familiar with the existing Polish laws of labor protection of female and juvenile workers. For this reason [redacted] not able to elaborate on the subject and to compare the theory with reality. [redacted] only that the pregnant women employed at the mental hospital in Pruszkow were usually transferred to the quiet wards and assigned to the easier jobs. [redacted] own observation and conversation with women, [redacted] Polish women, especially the young generation, were easily influenced and yielded to the Communist propaganda which induced them to work in all positions and trades. In general, [redacted] Polish women were industrious and would willingly work in different professions or as manual workers not only because it was necessary for the increased income it provided but also because they regarded it as a duty to their country. However, their natural enthusiasm was diminishing mostly because the communistic system demanded far too much from them and did not leave them any time for family and private life. Many of the married working women were disillusioned and discouraged because after working for many years they were still faced with many difficulties and hardships. Many women [redacted] dreamed of nothing else but leaving their white collar or factory jobs and devoting themselves entirely to housework and their children. 50X1
16. The Polish press, especially Trybuna Ludu, very often repeated slogans to the effect that the old prewar prejudice about the inferiority of women was broken and it was true that all jobs and trades were open and accessible to women in Poland. They worked as coal miners under the surface, in heavy industry, and even as construction workers on day and night shifts. [redacted] heard of any jobs being reserved for men only nor of women being excluded from any work for health reasons. 50X1
17. Almost every copy of the Polish weekly, Kobieta i Zycie (Woman and Life) gave descriptions of women's life in Poland. The articles included short life stories and the enthusiastic statements of different women about their achievements in work as well as their social and political activities. The accounts of life and conditions in the country were not true. Most of the stories were usually exaggerated and highly colored accounts written by ardent Communists.
- 50X1 18. Only sometimes could one find a true statement printed in the papers, e.g., in Zycie Warszawy dated 18 January 1954, from which the source quoted the following, "[redacted] are both working and we have no time for our child, in fact we do not know our child". Source added that [redacted] it was very often the case that when wife and husband were working they did not find time for 50X1

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their own children; and, as a result, the children easily fell under the influence of the Communist Party through their school and youth organizations. The parents were seldom at home, even in the evening, because in addition to their daily work they had to attend various meetings and courses almost every day as well as having to take an active part in so-called social work in different organizations. They were forced to do this because of the fear of being marked as enemies of the people which reputation could cost them their jobs.

19. In source's opinion, the women and youth in Poland were in no way protected but rather exploited by the regime. Among other so-called social activities source mentioned that university students, male and female, were forced to take an active part in the Committee of Cooperation with the Rural Areas (Komitet Wspolpracy ze Wsią). This committee organized trips of groups of students to different villages where they had to give lectures on topics of national interest, such as the elections or collectivization. The students were assigned to this job; they were forced to prepare the lectures according to Party instructions and deliver them, because if they did not comply they would get a black mark from the Polish Youth Association (ZMP) and, as a result, would not be able to continue their studies. [redacted] 50X1
- was not able to give any further information on juvenile workers.

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